

4VAC15-50-11. Game: Bear: Open Season; Generally.

Summary:

The proposal will (i) add the 3- day early open season to the counties of Albemarle and Frederick, (ii) add the 3-day early season to Amherst, Bedford and Nelson counties, (iii) remove references to Augusta County north and south of US 250, (iv) add two weeks of open season to 35 counties in south-central and eastern Virginia, (v) add two weeks of open season to 11 counties or portions thereof in southwestern Virginia south of I-81, (vi) add one week of open season to 7 counties or portions thereof in southwestern Virginia north of I-81, and (vii) extend the duration of bear hunting within incorporated cities and allow towns to have the same season.

Proposed language of amendment:

4VAC15-50-11. Open Season; Generally.

A. It shall be lawful to hunt bears in the following localities, including the cities and towns therein, during the following seasons:

| Location | Season |
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| Accomack County | Closed |
| Albemarle County | <u>Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following;</u> and the Ffourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Alleghany County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Amelia County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days-following. |
| Amherst County | <u>Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following;</u> and the Ffourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Appomattox County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days-following. |
| Arlington County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Augusta County (North of US 250) | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Augusta County (South of US 250) | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Bath County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Bedford County | <u>Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following;</u> and the Ffourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |

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| Bland County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Botetourt County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Brunswick County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Buchanan County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the first-fourth Monday in December November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Buckingham County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Campbell County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Caroline County | Fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Carroll County | First Monday in nearest December 2 and for 19 days following through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Charles City County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Charlotte County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Chesapeake (City of) | October 1 through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Chesterfield County | Fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Clarke County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Craig County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Culpeper County | Fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Cumberland County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Dickenson County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the first-fourth Monday in December November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Dinwiddie County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Essex County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Fairfax County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Fauquier County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Floyd County | First Monday in nearest December 2 and for 19 days following through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Fluvanna County | Fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Franklin County | First Monday in nearest December 2 and for 19 days following through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |

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| Frederick County | <u>Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive.</u> |
| Giles County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Gloucester County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Goochland County | Fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Grayson County | <u>First Monday in nearest December 2 and for 19 days following through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive.</u> |
| Greene County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Greensville County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Halifax County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Hanover County | Fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Henrico County | Fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Henry County | <u>First Monday in nearest December 2 and for 19 days following through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive.</u> |
| Highland County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Isle of Wight County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| James City County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| King and Queen County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| King George County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| King William County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Lancaster County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Lee County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the first fourth Monday in December November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Loudoun County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Louisa County | Fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Lunenburg County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Madison County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Mathews County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Mecklenburg County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Middlesex County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Montgomery County (southeast of I-81) | <u>First Monday in nearest December 2 and for 19 days following through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive.</u> |

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| Montgomery County (northwest of I-81) | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Nelson County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| New Kent County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Northampton County | Closed |
| Northumberland County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Nottoway County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Orange County | Fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Page County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Patrick County | First Monday in nearest December 2 and for 19 days following through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Pittsylvania County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Powhatan County | Fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Prince Edward County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Prince George County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Prince William County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Pulaski County (southeast of I-81) | First Monday in nearest December 2 and for 19 days following through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Pulaski County (northwest of I-81) | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Rappahannock County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Richmond County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Roanoke County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Rockbridge County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Rockingham County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Russell County (except on the Channels State Forest and Clinch Mountain WMA) | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the first Monday in December through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |

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| Russell County (on the Channels State Forest and Clinch Mountain WMA) | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Scott County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the first-fourth Monday in December <u>November</u> through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Shenandoah County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Smyth County (southeast of I-81) | First Monday in nearest <u>December 2</u> and for 19 days following through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Smyth County (northwest of I-81) | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Southampton County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Spotsylvania County | Fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Stafford County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Suffolk (City of) | October 1 through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Surry County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Sussex County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Tazewell County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Virginia Beach (City of) | October 1 through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Warren County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Washington County (southeast of I-81) | First Monday in nearest <u>December 2</u> and for 19 days following through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Washington County (northwest of I-81 and east of Route 19) | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the first-fourth Monday in December <u>November</u> through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Washington County (northwest of I-81 and west of Route 19) | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the first Monday in December and for 19 days following. |
| Westmoreland County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |
| Wise County | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the first-fourth Monday in December <u>November</u> through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Wythe County (southeast of I-81) | First Monday in nearest <u>December 2</u> and for 19 days following through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| Wythe County (northwest of I-81) | Monday following the last Saturday in September and for 2 days following; and the fourth Monday in November through the first Saturday in January, both dates inclusive. |
| York County | Monday nearest December 2 and for 519-consecutive hunting days following. |

- 7 B. Except as provided in the subsection A of this section, bears may be hunted from the first-Saturday
8 ~~prior to the fourth Monday in November~~ October through the first Saturday in January, both dates
9 inclusive, within the incorporated limits of any town or city that allows bear hunting.

Rationale:

The current status and management objectives for black bear populations support step-wise approaches to increasing bear harvest in several bear management zones, even in some areas with current objectives to increase populations. Another objective is to provide localized management opportunities for bear-human conflicts in areas like cities and towns. Certain proposals enhance significant season changes made during the 2017 regulation amendment cycle to help address human-bear conflicts and bring about measured population reductions in areas primarily west of the Blue Ridge. Increased harvest in other areas is also warranted to allow for increased hunter opportunity while meeting cultural carrying capacity (CCC) objectives and simplifying seasons for hunter convenience.

Specific rationale for proposed regulatory amendments are as follows:

- (i) In 2017, the Board approved the 3 - day early open season to meet new population objectives in the western part of Virginia, including the counties of Albemarle and Frederick. These two counties were inadvertently left off the list sent to the registrar. This proposed change would remedy that omission.
- (ii) Amherst, Bedford and Nelson (Zone 8) are no longer meeting bear population objectives and require an additional conservative season. Adding the 3-day season would simplify the boundaries and seasons for hunters by making the early season contiguous in the traditional western bear hunting counties.
- (iii) This administrative change would combine Augusta County north and south of US 250 in the table since there is no difference in open season between the two sections of the county.
- (iv) Adding two weeks of open season to 35 counties in south-central and eastern Virginia would continue to meet objectives in the Black Bear Management Plan while providing additional recreational opportunities for all types of hunters/hunting methods. There is interest among hunters in these areas for more opportunity during the general firearms season, and fortunately, few conflicts have been reported. The addition of bear hounds has caused few issues in the field because deer hounds are already being used concurrently during the general firearms deer season. Concurrent deer and bear firearms seasons allow opportunistic hunters the ability to harvest a bear and would provide all types of hunters (hound and still) a longer period to hunt. On the other hand, the proposed increase is modest enough that an inordinate number of female bears will not be harvested, which could jeopardize attainment of population objectives in these zones. Extending the general firearms season, instead of earlier seasons such as muzzleloader season, would more appropriately meet CCC objectives by protecting some sows from harvest since they will have already denned. The muzzleloader season has greater potential population impacts due to the greater number of female bears harvested by early season hunters. This high female bear harvest, compounded with the likely influx of additional hunters from other areas of the state to participate in this muzzleloader season, would result in a greater mortality rate than can be justified under bear population objectives in these areas.
- (v) Adding two weeks of open season to 11 counties or portions thereof in Southwest Virginia south of I-81 will help meet population objectives set in the 2012-2021 Black Bear Management Plan. These populations are currently increasing at a moderate rate and require increased harvest in order to meet current CCC objectives.
- (vi) Bear populations in Zone 1 are among the fastest growing in Virginia. Attempts to stabilize these populations have been added incrementally. One week of open season would likely meet bear

population objectives in Zone 1, and a portion of Zone 2 would be included to create uniformity in seasons in the region. Zone 2 already has the 3-day early firearms season, so this new proposal would create uniform seasons in western Virginia. Adding these two weeks would standardize the season in the north of I-81 portion of Washington and Russell Counties so there would be no need to maintain two north of I-81 sections of the counties in the table.

- (vii) For many years, a full-length open season has been available in incorporated cities regardless of the season in the surrounding county(ies). Because of increasing human-bear conflict issues in both incorporated towns and cities throughout Virginia, this proposal would extend the length of time bear hunting is allowed within cities and also make the same season available to towns. This regulation will not supersede local ordinances with respect to hunting or use of weapons.

Open season proposal maps:

